

Quality Educational Services in University: Self-Evaluation Using Quality Indicators

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Abstract

This paper seeks to help us answer following aspects: The University could be able to offer good educational services? Are these services at higher standards?

It suggests how we can identify strengths and areas for improvement, report on standards and quality and draw up plans for action. All those involved in the provision of services may have a role to play: the staff as a whole, the “head teacher”, senior managers, individual teams, departments or stages, parents and others with a stake in our schools, the education authority.

Keywords: *educational services, university self-evaluation, higher education management, quality indicators*

JEL classification: A20, A29

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to help in evaluating the quality of education in university (as school organization) offering a model of institutional self-evaluation. It is based on a set of quality indicators for:

- recognize key strengths;
- identify areas where good quality needs to be maintained or where improvement is needed;
- identify priorities for school development plan;
- report on standards and quality in organization.

Once we have decided to take a thorough look at an aspect of the university, the next step it is to ask the following two questions:

- what features of best practice should we be looking for?
- what evidence will help us to decide how well we are doing?

These are recognizing as valid arguments for a modern quality assurance management.

Before the emergence of “modern” quality approaches and concepts, the education world had already developed its own quality methodology and analysis. The roots of qualitative analysis in education grow from different points of view (Van de Berghe, 1995). Different sciences and theories explain education quality very simply but, in the same time, very profoundly. For example sciences of education consider education quality as optimization of teaching, learning and evaluation. Theory of customer regards this as optimization of demand. At the same time economic theory explains this concept as a ratio between optimization of education and costs of the educational process. A sociological explanation is referring to the response to social demand for education and management point of view considers quality education as optimization of the organization and the process of education.

But what is “modern” in quality assurance management in higher education? Quality is an expedient educational activity and high- quality educational services. Each University community member, professors and researchers, staff members and students in special, is responsible for the quality of the University in their activities. Students should be active participants in their own education and be involve in the higher education sector’s approaches to quality assurance and enhancement. A system of both, techniques and behaviors, special created to offer good educational services to its client’s. The University quality assurance system supports the activity and development of activity of each member of the University community.

The Bologna Process, witch started in 1999, includes the common quality assurance principles for the European education area. In accordance with the principles, the quality assurance system of the higher education institutions includes a procedure, which guarantees the quality of the higher education institutions. Usually this procedure is auditing or external evaluation of the quality assurance system, which is carried out by the specific institutions.

Three basic points are at the heart of the process of evaluation: doing, knowing, and going to do.

Doing?

Asks us to consider how the university is performing in relation to the aims identified.

Suggests how self-evaluation (one of the most neglected for of explicit evaluation) can help.

Knowing?

Describes the use of quality indicators to measure how we are doing within key areas of provision and indicates reference points for evaluation.

Going to do?

Describes how to report and take forward what we know about standards and quality in schools.

2. About self-evaluation - What is it?

What we mean by quality changes over time in response to changes in society and our own experience. All those involved in education are engaged in a constant process of learning and of developing their ideas, whether they are students, managers, teachers or education officials. Self-evaluation, change and improvement are therefore both natural and essential to an effective university. *Self-evaluation* is used interchangeably with self-assessment and *self-study* in the context of higher education quality. Self evaluation might see at the institutional level.

Universities are accountable to society, and professors, are involved in agreeing aims and policies to promote and improve students' learning and attainment. In doing this, we refer to: our own assessment of the needs of students and the community we serve, the views of parents, students and the community at large, advice from local and national bodies and reports of studies into effective learning and teaching. That's why self evaluation improve the educational experiences you provide for your students because it could identify the professional education you need to further develop your capacity to teach well. In the same time self evaluation prepares for your performance review with your team and assesses your readiness to apply for promotion and tenure. University self-evaluation is about asking about questions such as: *How are we doing in this university?* and - *How are we doing in this classroom?*

In self evaluation the instrument design could follow four essential dimensions (see box 1): teaching, service (with student interaction and community service), scholarship / creative activities / research and goals for future.

A good university knows:

- What it is aiming to do
- Whether it is meeting its aims successfully
- What needs to be maintained or improved
- Whether changes are working.

If a university knows these things and acts on them, it is well on the way to having a good quality assurance system.

- How are we doing in this department?
- How are we doing in this team?

It involves:

- A ***broad view*** of performance across what have become known: curriculum, attainment, learning and teaching, support for students, resources and management, leadership, quality assurance;
- A ***deeper look*** at specific areas viewed as successful or causing concern.

Dimensions		Items
1. Teaching		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Features of teacher's pedagogy that has proven effective. ▪ Kinds of readings or projects do teachers assign students. (The rationale for these assignments?) ▪ New approaches or methods in teacher's courses. What were they? Strengths and weaknesses evaluation. Areas for improvements. ▪ Incorporated field trips or outside experiences for the students. What were they? Strengths and weaknesses evaluation. Areas for improvements. ▪ Produced or incorporated significantly new materials for the courses for current year. What were they? Strengths and weaknesses evaluation. Areas for improvements. ▪ Student's progress evaluation. How effective are these measures? ▪ Taught courses which teachers had not taught previously or for a long time? What about? Preparation measures? Strengths and weaknesses evaluation. Areas for improvements. ▪ Initiation experimental or new courses. Strengths and weaknesses evaluation. Areas for improvements. ▪ Extended teacher's knowledge or expertise in the discipline. Methods?
2. Service	Student interaction	Mention and describe the contributions in advising, help sessions, work with student organizations, tutoring etc.
	Community service	Mention and describe the service contributions.
3. Scholarship / creative activities / research		Mention conferences, coursework, seminars, participation in a peer collaboration, campus events, memberships in professional organizations, etc. and evaluate the contribution of each to professional development unless self-evident.
4. Goals for future		Listing goals, specifying areas targeted for self-improvement. Mention and/or describe what should be done in support of goals. In addition, assess progress in meeting previously expressed goals. Goals should reflect departments, faculty and university goals.

Version adapted after http://www.pstcc.edu/departments/human_resources/docs/fac_eval-instr.doc

The stimulus to take a closer look could derive from:

- An issue identified during the broad view;
- The regular cycle within which the work of the educational institution is reviewed;
- A project arising from a national priority or local improvement objective, perhaps developed in partnership with other universities, the community, economy, or research institutes;

- A periodic review of progress made in implementing priority projects within the university development plan;
- An issue arising from a survey of parents' or students' views;
- An audit of provision carried out within the education authority's structure for quality assurance and improvement.

By reviewing all those over a number of years, universities are able to see what needs to be improved or maintained by using clearly defined measures of success. University self-evaluation is an essential stage in planning for medium and long term.

Effective self-evaluation provides a strong basis for good planning and, in the same time, planning takes place at all levels of the education system (*EQAO, 2005* and *HGIOS, 2002*). For example: priorities and targets are set nationally for key aspects of educational performance and universities use these objectives as a basis for deciding their own priority projects and targets for action. That's why well managed planning means:

- a. Promotes effective learning and teaching;
- b. Focuses on improving the quality of student' attainment and experience;
- c. Ensures that change is managed and monitored by those implementing it;
- d. Helps us to be realistic in setting priorities, targets and timescales;
- e. Helps us to make best use of our school budget and resources.

A good development plan embraces all of these factors. It summarizes the university's aims and the results of self-evaluation. It outlines the university's strategy for improvement, identifies priority, projects and sets clear targets for action. An effective cycle of self-evaluation and planning for action is the key to quality assurance and improvement. Quality assurance encompasses all aspects of university life. It includes ensuring that equality and fairness are embedded in the day-to-day work of such organization.

3 About quality indicators

Quality indicators help us analyze the quality of university provision. They relate to a range of factors, which influence the effectiveness of students' learning and over which university has control. Those quality indicators are useful in qualitative analyze of performance, identify a multitude of areas (which require detailed investigation) and enable management to come to decisions about the overall pattern of strengths and weaknesses in the university's performance (*Cace, 2004*). When we analyze performance using those indicators, we may refer to a number of sources of evidence:

- University assessments of student attainment;
- Analyses of other data;
- Criteria used within other quality assurance frameworks.

These indicators can be used:

- Within a whole university audit when identifying areas for action;

- To identify contributing factors when analyzing attainment;
- To take a broad view of the school's overall performance as part of the planning process;
- To take a closer look at a specific area within a regular cycle of self-evaluation;
- To follow up issues arising from surveys of students' views;
- To monitor progress on, and evaluate implementation of, priority projects within the development plan;
- To evaluate quality in relation to a single issue; this may be specific to the school or relate to a national or local priority.

There are seven areas relating to the main aspects of university's work (table 1): curriculum, attainment, learning and teaching, support for students, climate and relationships, resources, management, leadership and quality assurance (HGIOS, 2002).

This model presented is not quite "the best" or singular or does not give us an exhaustive picture of quality indicators. We just offered the main aspects of university's work and how it can evaluate itself using quality indicators for measuring: curriculum, attainment, learning and teaching, support for students, climate and relationships, resources, management, leadership and quality assurance.

Our main aim was to present a model able to evaluate the quality of education in university (as school organization). This model is based around a set of quality indicators set to: - recognize key strengths, identify areas where good quality needs to be maintained or where improvement is needed, identify priorities for school development plan, report on standards and quality in such organizations.

Aspects of university's work: Quality indicators

Table 1

Dimensions	Items	Quality indicators
1. Curriculum	Structure of the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ breadth and balance across elements of the curriculum; ▪ integration and permeation; ▪ timetabling and arrangements for student choice
	Courses and curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ breadth, balance and choice; ▪ integration, continuity and progression; ▪ support and guidance for teachers
2. Attainment	Quality of attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the university's progress in raising attainment; ▪ students' progress in learning; ▪ evaluations across other related quality indicators.

3. Learning and teaching	Teacher's planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ planning of curricula and daily activities
	The teaching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ range and appropriateness of teaching approaches; ▪ teacher-student interaction; ▪ clarity and purposefulness of questioning
	Student's learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extent to which the learning environment stimulates and motivates students; ▪ personal responsibility for learning, independent thinking and active involvement in learning; ▪ interaction with others.
	Meeting student's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ choice of tasks, activities and resources; ▪ provision for students with differing abilities and aptitudes; ▪ identification of learning needs
	Assessment as part of teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assessment methods and arrangements for recording; ▪ judgments made in the course of teaching; ▪ use of assessment information
	Reporting students' progress and reporting procedures	information given to parents about each student's progress
4. Support for students	Respect cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare and protection of students; ▪ provision for meeting the emotional, physical and social needs of individual students;
	Personal and social development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ planned approaches to promoting personal and social development; ▪ students' progress in developing positive attitudes and personal and social skills; ▪ contribution of extra-curricular and other activities.
	Curricular and vocational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ employment guidance; ▪ accuracy and relevance of information and advice; ▪ extent to which guidance is founded on appropriate consultation.
	Monitoring progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the monitoring process achievement; ▪ profiles of students' progress and development; ▪ arrangements for using acquired information.
	Learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ curricula to support students' learning; ▪ students' progress and attainment; ▪ implementation of the roles of learning support.
	Placement of students with special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ processes for placements of students with special needs (disabilities) into classes, and access ways.

5. Climate and relationships	Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reception and atmosphere; ▪ student and staff morale; ▪ student/staff relationships; ▪ student's behavior and discipline.
	Equality and fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sense of equality and fairness; ▪ ensuring equality and fairness.
	Partnership with other institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ local authority, universities, employers agencies, different NGO's.
6. Resources	Accommodation and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sufficiency, range and appropriateness; ▪ arrangements to ensure health and safety.
	Organization and use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ organization and accessibility and space; ▪ use of resources; ▪ display and presentation of items of interest.
	Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provision of staff; ▪ experience, qualifications and expertise of staff.
	Effectiveness and deployment of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ effectiveness of teachers and teamwork staff; ▪ effectiveness and deployment of auxiliary staff
	university management of finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding of university funding mechanisms; ▪ arrangements for managing the university's budget; ▪ use of finance in support of university planning and learning and teaching.
7. Management, leadership and quality assurance	Aims and policy making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clarity and appropriateness of aims; ▪ effectiveness of procedures for formulating policy.
	Self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ processes of self-evaluation; ▪ monitoring and evaluation by promoted staff; ▪ reporting on standards and quality.
	Planning for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ development plan; ▪ action planning; ▪ forward impact of planning.
	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ leadership qualities; ▪ professional competence and commitment; ▪ relationships with people and development of working team.

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